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ABSTRACT

This publication lists 29 suggestions for ways in which practitioners can develop self-esteem in adults with learning disabilities. It defines self-esteem and discusses the benefits of fostering an individual's sense of self-esteem. Incorporation of these suggestions into the learning situation is recommended as a way to help establish an environment that fosters self-esteem for the student with special learning needs. (YLB)

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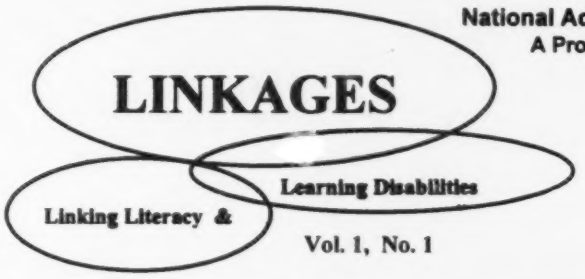


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# Update

## Self-Esteem

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### How can practioners develop self-esteem in adults with learning disabilities?

Establish a learning environment that is flexible, spontaneous and relaxed.

♦♦♦

Reduce emphasis on competition and perfection.

♦♦♦

Emphasize the student 's best work.

♦♦♦

Emphasize learning strengths; de-emphasize learning weaknesses.

♦♦♦

Provide immediate feedback within a positive framework.

♦♦♦

Select materials that are age/stage appropriate and present them in a correspondingly appropriate manner.

♦♦♦

When appropriate, design assignments to be open-ended, allowing for creative, individual approaches to task completion.

♦♦♦

Provide opportunities for the learner to report through the means that tap individual strengths: computer, verbal, written, graphic/pictorial.

♦♦♦

Create learning situations in which attributes not generally measured on tests can be developed: goal-setting, ingenuity, drive and determination, resourcefulness, and effective interpersonal skills.

♦♦♦

Eliminate the use of a red pen, a color that denotes errors or mistakes.

♦♦♦

When possible, allow extra time for completing tasks, and do so without making the student self-conscious.

♦♦♦

Break assignments into small segments, establishing a more immediate sense of accomplishment.

♦♦♦

Pair off learners so that each takes responsibility in the event of the other's absence.

♦♦♦

Call on a student when he/she is most likely to respond correctly; allow plenty of time for the student to begin responding.

♦♦♦

Reinforce improvement; have the student record progress on a chart so that he/she has tangible evidence of success.

♦♦♦

Consider using peer tutoring; ensure that each student gets the opportunity to be a tutor as well as a learner.

♦♦♦

Communicate praise realistically; don't overdo it so that it becomes ineffective.

♦♦♦

Encourage the student to keep trying; conclude the lesson before frustration sets in; transition to something he/she can master.

♦♦♦

Encourage the learner to take responsibility for individual tasks within the larger whole of the assignment.

♦♦♦

Communicate to the student the idea that you believe he/she will be successful at each task.

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Respect the uniqueness of each student.

♦♦♦

Communicate to each student that he/she is valued through smiling, listening, and eye contact.

♦♦♦

Tune in to what interests the learner through discussions and attentive listening.

♦♦♦

Talk good-naturedly about your own areas of weaknesses; admit to not knowing something and state that you will make it a point to find out.

♦♦♦

Try to work around and not focus on behavior that can result from learning disabilities, i.e., difficulty focusing attention on details, lack of organization, time, and spatial difficulties.

♦♦♦

Help the student learn how to communicate his/her strengths and weaknesses to friends, family, co-workers, and supervisors.

♦♦♦

Encourage positive self-talk; i.e., "I'm doing a good job," or "It feels good to accomplish this."

♦♦♦

Encourage the student never to use learning disabilities as an excuse for not doing his/her best.

♦♦♦

Leave the learner with the ability to generate personal self-esteem.

♦♦♦

**Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves. It is the picture we have of ourselves. Educators know that fostering an individual's sense of self esteem opens the door to enhanced learning. High self esteem develops out of an assurance that the student can generally be successful at accomplishing goals. This positive self-concept grows out of the individual's opportunity (1) to develop a realistic appraisal of his/her strengths and weaknesses, (2) to fail on occasion, with the help to get up and move on, and (3) to develop an awareness of and a respect for others' strengths and weaknesses.**

**High self-esteem is a by-product of a strong learning situation which is, for most people, one where the learner is provided the opportunity to tackle challenging work and a disciplined environment in which to do it.**

**This is no less true for the student with learning disabilities. What must be considered by learning disabilities practitioners is the fact that many of their adult students have likely had years of discouraging learning experiences and, thus, are likely burdened with low self-esteem.**

**Incorporating these suggestions into the learning situation should help establish an environment in which self-esteem can develop for the student with special learning needs.**

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